

## Hill Creek Expressway Project

## PROGRESS REPORT

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Lincoln M. Alexander  
Parkway Opens

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS



On October 15, 1997, the East-West section between Highway 403 and Dartnall Road was opened to traffic. The current schedule calls for the completion of the facility to the QEW by 2002 following a north-south route within the Red Hill Creek Valley. The forecast costs (in \$ million) for the project are as follows:

	To Dec '97	To Complete	Total
east-west	151	17	168
north-south	44	155	199
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>367</b>

The Region will contribute a total of \$161 million: \$85 million for the east-west section and \$76 million for the north-south section.

During the past several months, questions have been raised regarding the justification for the construction of the north-south portion of the roadway. This progress report provides a consolidated response.

***Why is the Region going ahead with the construction of a new road in the Valley since improvements and/or expansion of the present road network can accommodate the forecast traffic growth?***

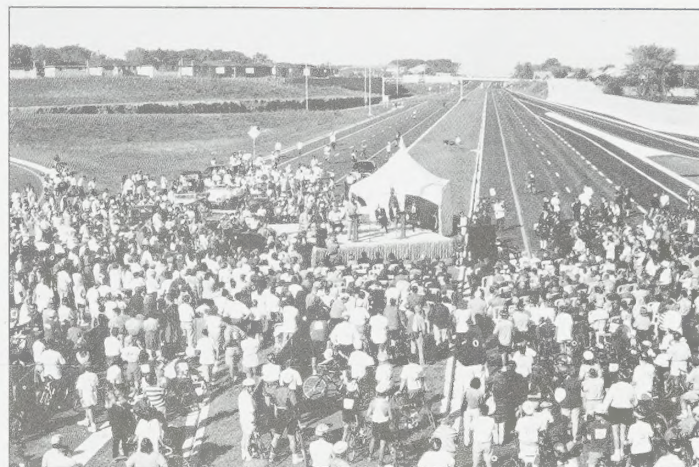
Since, the existing road network is operating at or near its current capacity, traffic generated by any appreciable growth in the area south of the Escarpment cannot be reasonably accommodated. The chart illustrates the forecast traffic growth in relation to the current capacity. Without new roadway capacity, current issues of high volumes of through traffic in neighbourhoods and inadequate truck routes will continue.

The Region's 1982 Environmental Assessment (EA) concluded that the proposed road:

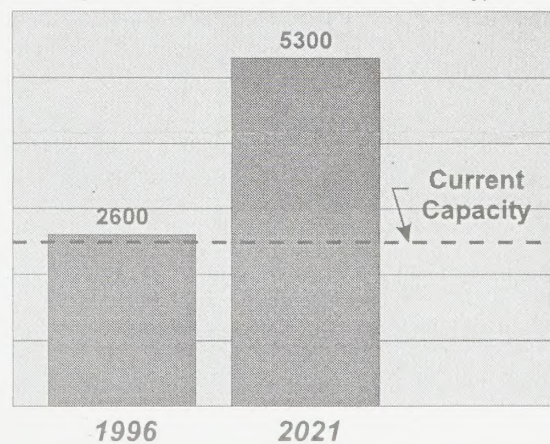
- must relieve peak period traffic congestion on the existing escarpment crossings;
- must improve neighbourhood safety by shifting through auto and truck traffic off of the local streets; and,
- must be part of an adequate transportation network to support future development identified in the Regional and Area Official Plans.

In a 1994 report, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) reconfirmed the Region's need for more transportation capacity across the eastern escarpment. "Without some road developments in this area, the existing north/south connections across the escarpment will experience severe congestion in the morning and evening rush hour periods.

Of the present roadways crossing the Escarpment, only Highway 20 can be reasonably expanded to provide additional capacity. However, the widening by one traffic lane in each direction would result in a total current capacity of approximately 3400 or 64 % of the forecast demand. The cost of this improvement would amount to \$33 million plus substantial property impact and business loss costs.



**P.M. Peak Hour Traffic, Southbound  
East Escarpment Crossings  
(Mt. Albion Road & Centennial Parkway)**



1996

2021

### ***Have other alternates been investigated?***

The Region's 1982 EA weighed the merits of fifteen alternatives and concluded on the basis of cost, property acquisition and community disruption (during construction) that a route through the Red Hill Valley was preferred. This conclusion was approved in 1985 by a Joint Hearing Board. It was also estimated that converting Centennial Parkway to a freeway would cost 50% more than a route through the Red Hill Creek Valley.

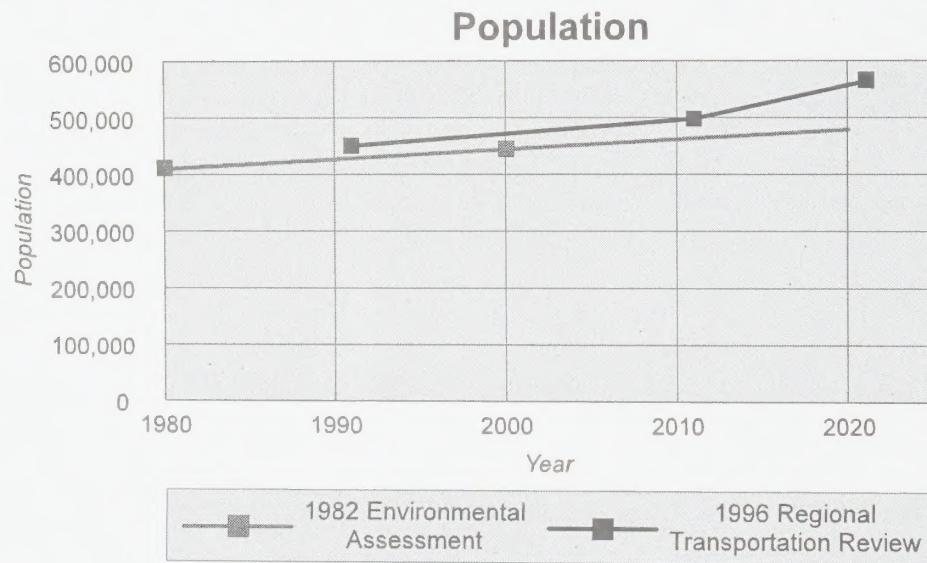
MTO's 1994 report stated "a widened Highway 20 and a new Mud St./Fruitland Road expressway would be required to meet the needs of the Region". Costs associated with this project were estimated at "well over \$200 million" and construction would have "serious impacts on the natural environment and the existing communities in the area, including the need for a new cut of the Niagara Escarpment at Fruitland Road".

### ***Would greater emphasis on improvements to public transit not avoid the need to build the expressway?***

On average, Hamilton-Wentworth residents use the transit system 48 times per year. Despite the Vision 2020 traffic forecasts that assume doubling the rate of transit usage, the travel demand would still be in excess of the present roadway capacity. It must further be recognized that an aggressive public policy related to the supply and cost of parking would be required to achieve this doubling of transit use.

### ***Will construction of the roadway support/accelerate growth and development in the Region?***

Automobile travel demand is directly related to population growth. Regional population growth projections for year 2001, originally identified in the 1982 EA, were surpassed in 1991 (see graph).



The relationship between improved access and the attractiveness for development has been demonstrated in numerous studies. Of particular importance, the expanded roadway capacity assists in directing growth in accordance with the planned development patterns. In doing so, past investment in municipal services is maximized. This is particularly relevant to the Expressway project.

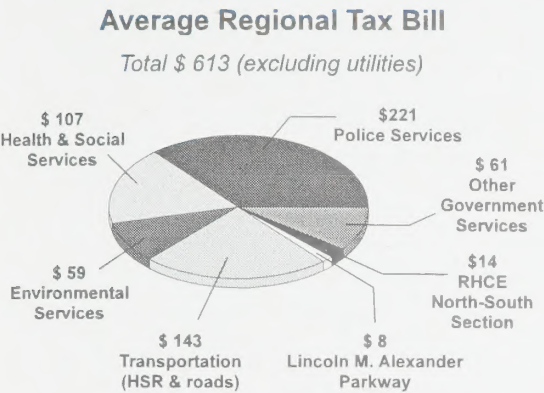
The development of the Heritage Green Community has been capped at 21,000 because of insufficient roadway capacity. With the Expressway development will be allowed to proceed to its planned serviced capacity of 36,000 population.

### ***Would not truck traffic increase tremendously, particularly through truck traffic?***

Most of the truck traffic using the Expressway will be vehicles diverted from adjacent parallel routes. This is a major objective in building the roadway.

There is a fear that the new link between Highway 403 and QEW will attract large volumes of through traffic. We believe the fear is unfounded. Today approximately 3,000 trucks use Highway 403 between Brantford and Ancaster. Assuming 25 % of this truck traffic would divert to the Expressway, the added traffic volume would represent less than 3 % of the total traffic on the roadway.

***The Region cannot afford to finish the roadway because of its current financial position and the proposed downloading of services from the Province in 1998. What has been spent to date and when will this project be finished?***



The total cost of the Expressway, including interchanges with Hwy 403 (Phase 1) and the QEW, is estimated at \$367 million. The Region's share amounts to \$161 million (see table). On average, the North-South section will add \$14 / year over the next 25 years to each Regional tax bill (see chart). While these costs are significant, they are considered to be affordable to the taxpayers as the costs represent only 0.5 % of the total average property tax bill (regional, local municipal and education taxes).

Cost Sharing (in \$ millions)			
	Region	Province	Total
East-West	85	83	168
North-South	76	123	199
	161	206	367
Spent to Date	80	108	188

The financial implications associated with the proposed downloading of services from the Province will not be fully understood until agreements are reached between the Region and Province.

***Has the significant reduction in costs been at the expense of the environment?***



Above, wetland creation at Dartnall Road Interchange

In 1996, a thorough review of the project and its costs was conducted jointly by the Region and MTO. This review included an analysis that looked at different ways of building and paying for the Expressway, accounting for inflationary allowances and actual expenditures for the East-West section (14 % below budget). Consequently, the original cost estimate was reduced based on the Region's experience of constructing the East-West section, building 4 lanes instead of 6 lanes, and deferral of the construction of Phase 2 of the Highway 403 and Mud Street interchanges. The reductions were not at the expense of safety standards or the environment. Evidence of the Region's commitment to the natural environment can be seen at the Dartnall Road Interchange (see photo).

***Isn't this the most expensive roadway built in Canada?***

The costs of building roadways will vary according to complexity (i.e., number of lanes, flat vs hilly terrain, extent of rock excavation, utility relocation and property acquisition costs, number of interchanges, etc.). The North-South section is more complex than the East-West section and therefore more expensive. While comparisons to other roadways can be misleading because no two roadways are alike over a fixed distance, the average design and construction costs of both the Expressway and Highway 407 in Toronto are approximately \$15 million per kilometre.

***The Region appears to have paid the private land owners considerably more for their land than the Region proposes to pay the City for its lands in the Valley. Why?***

All land acquisitions are based on fair market value. In this particular case the Region and City of Hamilton Real Estate Department have agreed to a purchase price for the land that reflects its fair market value. The major distinction however relates to the potential use of land; for example, most privately held property is for residential, commercial and industrial uses; the Valley lands are not suitable for such development and therefore cost less.

***Will the expressway significantly affect property values in adjacent neighbourhoods?***

Evidence to support this claim has not been demonstrated in the research. Property values rise and fall as a result of a combination of factors which include transportation access, market demands, and proximity to local amenities, to name a few.

***The construction of the roadway will impact air quality, noise levels, trees, the creek, fish habitat and recreational development in the Valley. How does the Region intend to mitigate impacts and ensure the predicted impacts are monitored?***

Since its approval in 1985, the Region has and will continue to investigate ways to reduce the Expressway's impact on the Red Hill Valley and adjacent neighbourhoods. Changes currently under investigation include:

- developing a new interchange design at the QEW that would minimize the impacts on the Red Hill/Van Wagner's Marshes;
- constructing a single crossing structure at the escarpment that would provide trail users and wildlife access under the roadway;
- implementing the project in such a way that would resolve erosion and siltation problems and in conformance with the Watershed Plan currently in preparation; and,
- adapting the Recreational Master Plan prepared for the City of Hamilton in 1989.

Impacts on: air quality, noise levels, trees, the creek, fish habitat, recreational development in the Valley, and the adjacent neighbourhoods, that result from building a 4 (instead of 6) lane Expressway as well as the changes previously mentioned, will be investigated over the next seven months with the full participation of the community. Ways to mitigate (reduce) predicted impacts will be developed at that time.

***What approvals does the Region have to meet under its Exemption Order? What external agencies are involved?***

The Exemption Order allows the Region to make changes to the Expressway design approved in 1985. It describes specific changes, impact studies, mitigation/compensation commitments, and public involvement proposals that the Region must address prior to construction.

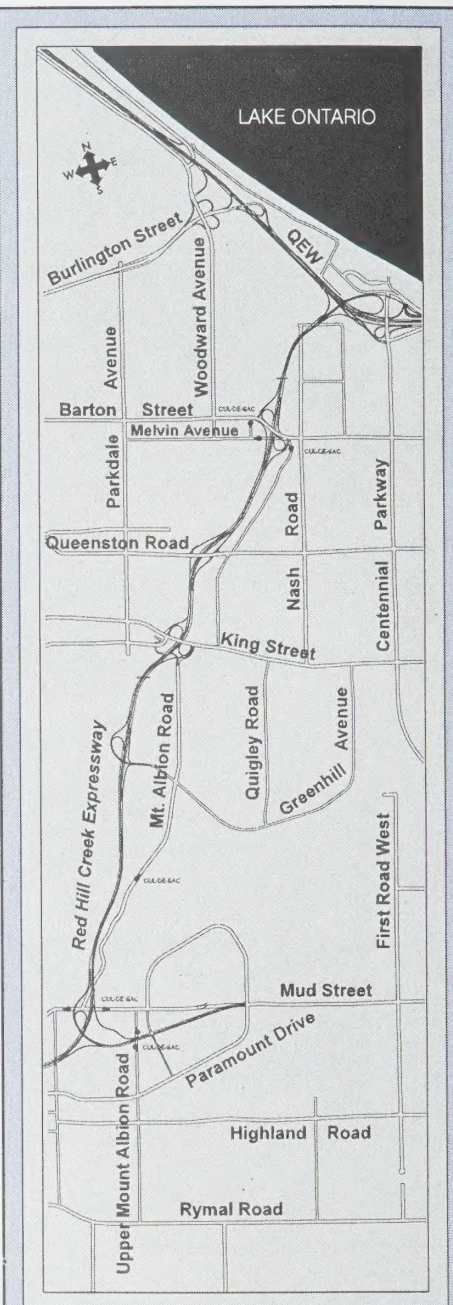
A number of government approvals were granted as a result of the 1985 Joint Board decision, however, others required under the Federal Fisheries Act, Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, Migratory Birds Convention Act (if habitat is impacted) and Ontario Environmental Protection Act still have to be obtained.

Agencies currently participating in the impact assessment work include: Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Environment Canada, Ontario Ministry of Environment and Energy, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of Transportation, and Niagara Escarpment Commission.

***How will the general public be consulted and informed about the project?***

A Community Stakeholder Committee comprised of environmental, economic and community interest groups will provide advice to the Region as it fulfils the requirements of the Exemption Order. Together, the Region and the Committee will design and implement a consultation program which will inform and involve the public in the decisions that the Region must make over the next seven months.

During the detail design and construction phases, the public will be informed through progress reports and public information centres, similar to the format used for the East-West section.



Red Hill Creek Expressway  
Progress Report  
is a publication of the  
Regional Municipality of  
Hamilton-Wentworth  
Special Projects Office.  
If you have any comments,  
suggestions, or questions,  
please contact the

**Roads Department  
Special Projects Office**  
25 Main Street West, 10th Floor  
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 1H1  
phone (905) 546-4277  
fax (905) 546-2385

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